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THE MUSIC OF WAR AND PEACE

WHEN we say that march music stirs the blood we do it and ourselves an injustice. It stirs something deeper than that in us; for soldiers on the march, singing as they go, are life itself become music, and it is as if a symphony of Beethoven had turned from art into fact. There we see men still men, but all made one in fellowship, with one impulse sounding in their tramp and in their voices. Yet, though they are men, they are no longer individuals, each thinking of his skin or his stomach, but rather notes of a great tune that are lost in its certainty and singleness of purpose.

So when we see and hear them we wish that all life were a march and all mankind an army with this concord and simplicity of duty, and that is the reason why nations so often seem to go wild with delight when war is declared. They feel then that their whole life is lifted and unified by a great common purpose. The nation becomes one, and the city mob, at other times so aimless, so frivolous, so much at odds with itself, lives as if it were marching to music, as if it were itself music. In a moment it escapes from the meaningless routine imposed upon it by the struggle for life, from all the separate little duties that make little conflicts between man and man. There is the enemy massing on the frontier, and here is the nation in one mass and one brotherhood moving against them. The petty strifes of no issue and no

import change into one momentous struggle that must be lost or won. History is making itself before men's eyes, and they themselves are a part of it. No wonder, then, that they should give themselves up to a great holiday of the emotions; and though this may express itself basely, as is the way of mobs, in the wrecking of embassies and the pelting of foreigners, yet it is not all base; it means something more than hatred or vanity or self-deceiving panic.

But this very rapture of escape from routine is a sign of failure in life, a proof that the routine is something to be escaped from at all costs. War is the one chance of collective happiness for an aimless society, as love is the one chance of private happiness for an aimless man. In both cases a bodily instinct supplies the impulse and makes both for the moment aware of their souls; and both sink back into their aimlessness as soon as the impulse is spent and the instinct satisfied. But a man who knows the adventures of the mind and the spirit does not find his soul and lose it again with this single adventure of love; nor does a society that knows how to live when at peace find its soul and lose it again with the single adventure of war. And here is a lesson for those eager pacifists who try to make us love peace by talking of the folly and the horrors of war. We shall only love peace when we have made it worthy of our love. Until then there will still be a narrow

truth in the saying, "Si vis pacem, para bellum." But that must give way to the greater truth that if you would have peace you must make it finer than war. And there is something to be learnt from war, from its discipline, and sacrifice, and concord, of what peace ought to be.

For instance, there was that letter which a private soldier sent to the father of an officer who was killed in action at Landrecies. "He was a gentleman and a soldier. The last day he was alive we had got a cup of tea in the trenches, and we asked him if he would have a drink. He said 'No; drink it yourselves; you are in want of it.' And with a smile, he added, 'We have to hold the trenches to-day.'" And the letter ends, "He died doing his duty and like the officer and gentleman he was." We have often heard the words "an officer and a gentleman" used in peace time, and perhaps they seem to us only a pompous phrase. But in this letter written from the front they are full of meaning. To be a gentleman there is not a class distinction, not a matter of custom, or dialect, or dress, or money. It is to be a leader in whom the led have faith because he makes his duty harder than theirs and thinks of that, not of his superiority. So he can lead them with a smile, "like the officer and gentleman that he is."

But if peace is to make us forget the glory of war, it must be a peace in which the word "gentleman" will keep that fullness of meaning; so that, when it is used of a man, it may give him that joy which it must have given to that father when it was so used of his son. We know what is thought of an officer who is lazy and considers his

own comfort in the field; but a gentleman in peace time can be lazy and consider nothing but his own comfort, and he will still be thought a gentleman and think himself one. No one expects such a man to be a leader because he is rich or has spent many years in learning, and few would have faith in him if he led. He is tested by nothing except his customs, his dialect, his dress, and his money. The most the poor expect of him is a civil tongue and a careless generosity in trifles; for these things they call him a gentleman, and often there is an indulgent contempt in their use of the word.

Well, war does us this good at least—that it makes us suddenly aware of the difference between a gentleman at his club and a gentleman in the trenches. Beautiful things happen between officers and men when an army is at war, and it brings the tears to our eyes to hear of them. But it is not enough to feel these fine emotions and because of them to say that war is not all an evil. That is so only if war teaches us how to make a finer peace and one that will cure us of all desire for war; a peace in which gentlemen will prove themselves, as these officers proved themselves, and if they do not they will lose the name of gentleman. In war, too, there is a chance of great adventures for all men, rich and poor; and the poorest can be a hero. But we must make a peace in which the poorest will have a chance of the adventures of the mind and spirit, and in which all men will know that these are worth more than riches or the respect now given to riches. We know how the French soldiers of the Revolution fought, because it was said that

each of them had a field-marshal's baton in his knapsack. In peace our poor ought to be like those armies of the Revolution, with the same sense of purpose in their lives and a great chance before them. Then peace would not be the negative thing it is now, but positive and filled with its own adventures, because of which no one would desire the adventures of war. Order to us now means a state in which the poor demand no more than is given to them and the rich can enjoy their riches without fear. It should mean an order like that of armies in the field, made by the tie between leaders and led, the tie of a common duty and a common opportunity. It should be the order, not of aimlessness and stagnation, but of purpose and advance. Then war would be merely a distraction from that purpose and a check to that advance, and men would be as impatient of it as if it were a noise breaking in upon music.

We spoke of the adventures of peace, adventures of the mind and spirit. Most men know so little of these that to them the artist, the philosopher, the saint, the man of science are not adventurers at all. They cannot believe in the exultation of victory where there is no enemy, in the thrill of discovery where there are no material obstacles to overcome. To them, and we cannot wonder at it, work is all part of the struggle for life and of the routine imposed upon men by that struggle; and peace means that routine unbroken and uninspired. They may try to escape from it by gambling, by sport, by debauchery, by all the varieties of

what we are pleased to call pleasure, and finally by war. But there is another escape, possible now to our civilization with its new command of all the forces of nature, an escape into the freedom of the mind which art and thought and religion offer to us. But what have we done yet with all our power to make that freedom possible to all? The great mass of men, it is thought, should exercise their moral faculties, for by means of them order is preserved among us, but not their artistic or their intellectual. These are to be exercised only by the well-to-do. Yet how little even they exercise them in proportion to the opportunities given them by leisure and education. How constantly they refuse all the adventures of thought and emotion which the universe and its unfathomed harmonies offer to them. How can we have time for war among ourselves when there is infinity before us to be felt and probed in so short a span of life, when we have the power to create another world of art with all the hopes and desires of men shaping it and sounding through it? If we saw our opportunity, and if it were open to all of us, we should have no time for war, and there would be an end among us of all fictitious distinctions, as there is in war itself, where the common man is no more thought of as a vulgarian or a fool but has his part in the music of the march and the glory of his country. So, then, he would have his part in the music of peace and in a glory of victory which meant no shame to any vanquished.